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ABSTRACT

This account of the proceedings documents a systemwide conference on student outcomes assessment intended to provide an opportunity for all California State University (CSU) campuses to share in the discussion of development and implementation of assessment program models. The document provides a sampling of the presentations and discussions that occurred. Topics include the policy environment for student outcomes assessment, the need for a consensus in student outcomes assessment, assessment in interdisciplinary general education, and the administrator's perspective. Also provided are presentations on student outcomes assessment in math and the natural sciences, the social and behavioral sciences, economics, writing, and theater arts. Finally, the future challenges surrounding student outcomes assessments are presented for both the state of California and the campuses, stressing the importance of the role of assessment in improving teaching and learning. (GLR)

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The 1988 CSU Systemwide Conference on Student Outcomes Assessment

"From Projects to Policy: Seize the Agenda"

November 16-18, 1988

UCLA Conference Center
Lake Arrowhead, California

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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1988 CSU SYSTEMWIDE CONFERENCE ON STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

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Major objectives of this initiative are as follows:

- increase awareness of the work of the CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning;
- increase access to the work of CSU/ITL affiliates;
- begin to build a subset of information on teaching and learning that supports *The National Teaching and Learning Forum (NTLF)*, ERIC/HE's newsletter;
- encourage use of the ERIC system by CSU/ITL member affiliates and the *NTLF* readership; and
- test a model for collaboration between ERIC/HE and a major higher education system.

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1988 CSU SYSTEMWIDE CONFERENCE ON

STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

"FROM PROJECTS TO POLICY: SEIZE THE AGENDA"

NOVEMBER 16 - 18, 1988

LAKE ARROWHEAD, CALIFORNIA

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

EDITED BY OLITA D. HARRIS

This conference was sponsored by Academic Program Improvement, California State University, Office of the Chancellor.

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PREFACE

The California State University has a long standing commitment to development of effective assessment programs. As a first step in understanding the implications of student outcomes assessment for the system, the Chancellor's Office sponsored a systemwide conference on the topic in October of 1986. That first conference was followed by three years of funding for pilot projects through the CSU academic program improvement fund. Proposals were invited for projects to demonstrate how student outcomes of various kinds could be utilized in assessing the effectiveness of general education or baccalaureate degree programs. Over this three year period, more than a half million dollars were allocated to eleven individual pilot projects in student outcomes assessment covering a broad range of concepts and contexts.

Our second CSU Systemwide Conference on Student Outcomes Assessment, held at Lake Arrowhead in November of 1988, was intended to provide an opportunity for all CSU campuses to share in the discussion of development and implementation of assessment program models. Academic Program Improvement is deeply grateful to the Conference Planning Committee, the campus project directors and other presenters, and especially to the Conference Coordinator, Dr. Olita Harris, for making this meeting a great success.

The Academic Program Improvement Advisory Committee has continued to recommend funding for campus pilot projects in Student Outcomes Assessment for the 1988-89 and 1989-90 grant cycles. The lessons learned in prior year projects and the information shared at the systemwide conferences have not only helped CSU Campuses in developing and refining assessment programs, but have also made a significant contribution to the national dialogue on this important topic.

Helen Roberts
Associate Dean
Institute for Teaching and Learning
CSU, Office of the Chancellor

INTRODUCTION

Much attention of late has been focused on higher education in this country as evidenced by the presence on the "best sellers list" of Bloom's book, The Closing of the American Mind. In addition, there is a movement among most states to verify that students, in fact, have obtained an education in our institutions of higher learning. In particular, assessing the results of undergraduate education has begun to receive a great deal of attention. According to Peter Ewell, in "Assessment, Accountability and Improvement: Managing the Contradiction," the current movement in assessment has grown out of assessment as an integral part of instruction as well as a need to demonstrate to the various publics, the effectiveness of public education. In a recent study by Carol Boyer, et al., it was found that two-thirds of the states had formal assessment initiatives in actuality or in process. Ewell has stressed that in order for demands (both external and internal), for accountability and the resultant programmatic changes (presumably directed toward program improvement) to be adequately met, the data must be capable of supporting comparative analysis and judgments. In addition, they must be stated in such a way as to be comprehensible to an interested general public.

It appears that administrators realize that if instructional improvement is to become a reality, then the process is likely to be a lengthy one and must go beyond the usual standardized tests. Moreover, implementing the resultant changes means that a sometimes reluctant and generally powerful faculty must be persuaded to cooperate in any assessment endeavor. Also, because of some of the inherent contradictions between accountability and curricular change and improvement, a number of choices must be made regarding the design and implementation of any local assessment effort.

In the CSU, student outcomes assessment has come to focus solely on program improvement and not, as in many other states, on accountability for funding or what is otherwise perceived as punitive actions by state legislatures. We need to commend ourselves for what we have accomplished in the absence of or threat of a legislative mandate.

The 1988 CSU Systemwide Conference on Student Outcomes Assessment was but the latest achievement in the chronology of student outcomes assessment activities in The California State University. The conference was sponsored by Academic Program Improvement and the Office of the Chancellor and was held at the UCLA Conference Center at Lake Arrowhead.

The conference had several purposes: to bring together faculty, administrators, and students to share information about assessment activities undertaken by CSU campuses; to provide the opportunity for participants to connect with helpful resources/expertise/contacts; to ask ourselves the "hard questions" about assessment as they relate to program outcomes; and to begin to delineate issues and areas for policy development. To that end, each campus was invited to select a team composed of an academic administrator, a member of the campus Academic Senate involved with educational policy issues, a faculty member responsible for some aspect of student outcomes assessment on the campus and a student. Most campuses sent a delegation of six or eight. Some sent delegations of ten to twelve people, resulting in 140 participants attending from 19 campuses.

The conference consisted of presentations and discussions and was designed as a "working conference" to provide the opportunity for sharing the successes and the pitfalls encountered in initiating and conducting student outcomes assessment projects. Each set of presentations were directed toward a set of questions/issues considered to be germane to the subject matter. The intent of the conference proceedings is not to present in total all of the presentations, but to provide a sampling of the presentations and discussions that occurred.

Olita D. Harris
Associate Professor
Conference Coordinator
School of Social Work
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KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

ASSESSMENT AND THE CSU

Lee Kerschner
Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs
CSU, Office of the Chancellor

Student Outcomes Assessment is integral to the teaching function. The American student is probably the most tested and evaluated student in the world. Although we currently do a great deal of assessment, we do not look at the total curriculum to determine whether or not students have achieved its intent. We test in "bits and pieces." This fact has caught the attention of state governments.

We have a responsibility to communicate to the public what our students are learning, regardless of mandate. We need to let our taxpayers know how well we are dodoingoing our job. The California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) report indicated that we have made some progress in that respect.

Many in the country assert that student outcomes assessment is inimical to access and that access is antagonistic to quality. Quality is completely and totally dependent on access. There is a dynamic tension between access and quality; assessment is the key to relating and articulating the two.

Student Outcomes Assessment is clearly here to stay. Whether or not we engage in it is a non-issue. Internally, the faculty need will drive progress toward assessment. State pressures are not the issue in California. Outcomes assessment must be integral to the instructional process; to improve teaching and learning.

We must use diagnostic testing and the feedback obtained from it to enhance the education of individual students. Faculty must develop assessment mechanisms appropriate to the diverse student population of the CSU. Assessment strategies must be multifaceted, as they will necessarily vary from discipline to discipline. Assessments must also be faculty designed and faculty run. Assessments must focus on the students and on teaching and learning. The future of assessment in the CSU is in your hands.

Discussion

After Dr. Kerschner's address a discussion followed. The following is a summary of the questions and responses. It is not intended to be a transcript of the discussion.

Question: Do students have a role in the development of outcomes assessment in the CSU?

Response: Students have been included at the policy level and to a degree in designing programs in departments. They should also have a role in implementation, although there is some reservation about involving students in determining the content of assessment instruments.

Question: What assurances do campuses have that faculty designed processes and instruments will satisfy politicians?

Response: There are no assurances. However, one achievement of note is that the Academic Senates of the three postsecondary segments (the community colleges, the University of California and the California State University) have agreed upon a Transfer Curriculum. This has generated some political leverage. The CSU and Chancellor are on record as being opposed to standardized testing and committed to campus-based student outcomes assessment.

Question: Two different approaches to student outcomes assessment have been promulgated, i.e., the call for quantification and also for qualitative kinds of assessment. Which is intended?

Response: The outer world is looking for simple yardsticks by which to judge us. The pressures for reporting quantitative data will be great and with the advent of computer technology, it is relatively easy. Our job is to convince them of the inappropriateness of simplistic measures. Multiple assessment strategies which includes qualitative elements is clearly preferable.

ASSESSMENT AND EXCELLENCE: POINT COUNTERPOINT

Alexander Astin
Professor and Director, Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles

Eric Solomon
Acting Provost and Professor of English, San Francisco State University

The dialogue between Dr. Astin and Dr. Solomon addressed the following questions:

1. What assumptions about higher education are inherent in our discussions of student outcomes assessment?

2. What is the purpose of assessment?

3. What role does assessment play in the maintenance of standards?

4. What is the proper role and responsibility of the faculty member in assessing student outcomes?

5. What is the relationship of student outcomes assessment to our educational equity mission?

The following is not a transcript of the remarks made by Dr. Astin and Dr. Solomon but a summary of the points they made in response to the above stated questions.

Dr. Astin: The CSU teaching and learning function has enormous potential for influencing trends in student values and capacities for effective citizenship.

Dr. Solomon: More assessment does not equal better education. Good teaching is a mystery. Assessment causes us to think of students as products.

Dr. Astin: We in academe have used assessment as a way of sorting, grading and ranking students and not necessarily to see what they have learned. We already use assessment as a control device rather than to benefit students. When others propose to assess us, we naturally assume they want to do the same thing to us. We do not view assessment as a process to help each other and benefit those we are charged with educating.

Dr. Solomon: We have used "standards" punitively against students, to suppress imagination and uniqueness. I would resist assessors making "standards" for my students.

Dr. Astin: Regarding Dr. Solomon's assertion that what happens in the teaching-learning process is too mystical to be assessed: We already do too much standardized testing. What we do need is to do more of the qualitative evaluation that Dr. Solomon suggests. What is needed is more personal interaction with students. Feedback is built into the assessment equation (when done best).

POLICY ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

This panel was composed of representatives from the Chancellor's Office, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the California Postsecondary Education Commission, and university administration.

Panelist Joan Sallee, Senior policy analyst at the California Postsecondary Education Commission, was asked to respond to the following question:

> In the minds of many people, student outcomes assessment is interpreted to mean that student learning will be measured by a single standardized test or set of tests, and that student scores on these tests will be used as an index to compare how effectively institutions are performing. Does the state want this kind of assessment? If not, what does it want?

This question wasn't easy to answer. The complexity of student learning appears to belie simple measurement by a single standardized test or set of test. Furthermore, given the variety of missions, goals, and admission criteria of colleges and universities, one might think that the test scores could not be used to compare the effectiveness of institutions. Yet, many states **have** established policies to assess the performance, knowledge, and skills of students enrolled in their public colleges and universities. In a review of assessment initiatives

in Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Florida, New Jersey, Georgia, Colorado, Texas, Virginia, Missouri, and Tennessee, it is clear that standardized test scores are being used to assess students and the effectiveness of the institutions educating them, and state policy is encouraging the effort.

Does the state of California want this kind of assessment? Even this part of the question isn't easy to answer because it isn't clear just who the state is. If the state is the Governor, then the state may likely favor assessment. Governor Deukmejian served with seven other governors on the Task Force on College Quality whose final report,"Time for Results," calls for each college and university "to have assessment programs in place to evaluate student, program, and institutional performance, and that information about program and institution performance be shared with the public." These governors believe that "as the primary source of funds for public higher education, the states have a major stake in the quality of postsecondary institutions that goes beyond measures on input and processes. State attention must be directed to the outcomes of the higher education system--namely, measuring how much students learn in college."

What if the state means the legislature? The legislature, of course, consists of individual legislators with often widely varying points of view. For example, it was Assemblyman Tom Hayden's 1986 Assembly Concurrent Resolution 141 and Assembly Bill 2016 introduced in 1987 that brought performance based budgeting and value added assessment to the Assembly and Senate floors. Six principles have been developed by CPEC in response to ACR 141 and the four recommendations in response to AB 2016, which include the establishment of a challenge grants program to support initiatives for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is conjectured that the state's current funding situation holds out little hope for funding any of these programs.

What if CPEC were considered the state? Rather than a state policy on assessment, CPEC has attempted to create a policy environment supporting institutional initiatives on assessment. Although CPEC does not want a state-imposed system of assessment, neither does it want a vacuum of leadership. It believes that the impetus for assessment provides an extraordinary opportunity for higher education to be creative and innovative, because assessment can be tied to teaching and learning in a self-conscious process of instructional improvement. Assessment can be a vehicle for talking about the curriculum and for strengthening it and has the potential to create what Gordon Davies of Virginia calls "a restlessness" in the curriculum. Institution should indeed seize the moment and develop an agenda before the Governor, the legislature, and even CPEC create their own.

The state is not the Governor or the legislature or individual legislators or CPEC; the state is the public and higher education holds the public trust. Institutions must know if what they are doing is worth it, if they're being effective, if they are producing educated men and women. Quite simply, assessment can be means to that end.

The remaining questions and their respondents were as follows:

Panelist: **Ralph Wolff**
Associate Executive Director
Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Mills College

It has been suggested that the "bloom is off the assessment rose;" that governors and legislators are losing interest in outcomes assessment. Several educational leaders, on the other hand, insist that outcomes assessment is not a passing fad, but will become a permanent feature of American higher education. Who is right? What signs do you see to support your view?

Panelist: **Helen Stewart**
Dean of Faculty, Sonoma State University

The point is often made that it is unreasonable to expect CSU faculty to take up the burden of developing outcomes assessment programs in addition to the many responsibilities added to their already heavy workload of teaching, scholarship and advising, and that faculty cannot be expected to pursue this without substantial release time and other kinds of fiscal support. What are the payoffs and trade-offs to individual faculty members and to campuses for redirecting their effort to assessment? How can this be supported without substantial additional resources?

All Panelists

One frequently hears that, owing to the Gann Limit and voter resistance to increasing taxes, California does not have the resources to invest in the development of comprehensive assessment programs. Under these constraints, resources to support student outcomes assessment must be redirected from other programs. Since the political cost of making such shifts is very great, it is unlikely that a requirement to develop outcomes assessment programs will be imposed upon, or accepted by, CSU campuses. Do you agree or disagree with this argument? Why?

Panel Convener: **Frank Young**,
Associate Dean, Academic Affairs,
Office of the Chancellor

SYSTEMWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: A SEARCH FOR CONSENSUS

The panelists addressed the following questions:

1. Are CSU procedures to evaluate the performance of individual students, courses, academic programs and institutions sufficient to improve teaching and learning?

2. Why should CSU campuses assess student outcomes more comprehensively and systematically than they now do? Why should the CSU develop unique assessment models?

3. What are the "trade-offs" necessary to obtain the benefits of outcomes assessment?

4. How can the CSU, as a system, best support campus efforts to develop faculty interest and expertise in assessment and encourage experimentation in this direction?

STUDENT OUTCOMES IN THE CSU: ANALYSIS INSTEAD OF ASSESSMENT

Panelist: **Kenneth L. Nyberg**,
Professor, Department of Anthropology/Sociology, CSU, Bakersfield

I have been asked to address--briefly, modestly and representatively--two substantial questions:

1. Why should CSU campuses assess student outcomes more comprehensively and systematically than they doe now?

2. Why should the CSU develop unique assessment models?

These two questions have framed the work of the Advisory Committee since its inception, and I can recall no simple, consensual answer to either, but rather an uneasy agreement arrived at after much debate, some ferocious argument, and at least one exceptionally fine bottle of wine, offered in apology.

Most members of the Advisory Committee acknowledge that we do, indeed, already assess student outcomes. After all, we reasoned, what are the tests we administer, the papers we assign, the independent studies we supervise if not means of, and for, the assessment of students? Further, what are EPT's, ELM's, GRE's and CBEST's? Is this all not "comprehensive" and "systematic" enough?

For me, it is all of this and more--indeed, all together too much. Einstein once remarked that, "There is too education..., especially in American schools," and while I am not quite sure of that, there certainly is far too much testing, especially in American universities. And that, typically, is what assessment has come to mean--more testing.

If we should substitute the term, "student outcomes <u>analysis</u>," for student outcomes <u>assessment</u>, however, then I think the first question becomes much more valuable, and the answer is clear. The CSU <u>does not</u>, either comprehensively or systematically, <u>analyze</u> student outcomes. Such analysis that does occur is anecdotal, episodic, and so absent of controls and intervening variables as to be essentially worthless. What do we know regarding the habits of life-long learning supposedly inculcated by our students? What uses have they made of their preparations in speech, writing, and mathematical derivation? As a preparatory and proving ground for the leaders of tomorrow, what wisdom and compassion have they acquired? And which, among these, will endure?

I, and I believe the rest of the Advisory Committee, have only a few concerns over the technical knowledge and practical masteries of our graduates. On these matters, there is no evidence of great failure, and only occasional evidence of selective difficulties. We, the professorate of American universities, retain a market-driven monopoly on higher education recognized the world over, and fashion a product of unparalleled
excellence and diversity. No other system of higher education in the world is asked to do as much, nor does any succeed so well.

For some time, however, the professorate has been expressing quiet doubts. We are uneasy about a variety of increasing practices, and rightfully suspicious concerning their latent, if not manifest, consequences. Among these I might note:

1. Our increasing reliance on part-time faculty and even graduate students to teach our courses, some of which are among the most important we require a student to take.

2. The proliferation of "pre-read" and publisher-crafted textbooks, bled dry of expanded vocabularies and difficult problems.

3. A class size and course load so burdensome that it drives all but the most resolute to op-scan test and short essay questions, hardly the manner by which to measure either critical rigor or factual depth.

4. A student body increasingly adverse to the adages of discipline, discovery, and deferred gratification and a parent class and government increasingly unable--and most sadly, unwilling--to provide for the student's college education.

These and many other similar issues, are compelling and deserving of answers more characterized by evidence than editorial. We need to know where we are headed and in relation to where we have been. We need to know the costs of a hundred small compromises, as well as the long term consequences of short-term costs. We need to know where we are failing our students, probably more so than where our students are failing us, and both
by our own standards--not those of legislators, employers and such. For over 1,000 years in the West, and for 350 years in America, the professorate has determined what a higher education will be. If others wish to now do so, let them earn their doctorates and their tenure, while they give us a shot at General Motors and the Department of Defense.

In this caution, and in this dare, can be found the answer to the second question. The advisory committee has examined, and some members have done so most thoroughly, practices in Florida, Tennessee, Missouri and elsewhere. In each of these places, models for "student outcomes assessment" have been articulated and implemented. And in each, we have good--and increasing--evidence that this is not what we want for the California State University.

The CSU is the largest and most diverse system of higher education in the nation, perhaps in the world. And in that size and diversity, perhaps the most ambitious, as well. Other states count as measures of attainment that which we take for granted, e.g. percentage of the professorate holding terminal degrees, and the number of professional degree programs which are accredited. Clearly, these crude measures hold little enticement for us. Further, many of these other programs are creatures of non-academic percentage, born out of a fear, not concern: ignorance, not enlightenment. And lastly, these programs are seized by the inelegant and essentially barren fashion of standardized tests, not recognizing that the Heisenberg Indeterminacy Principle operates here as elsewhere, letting the measure distort the phenomena.

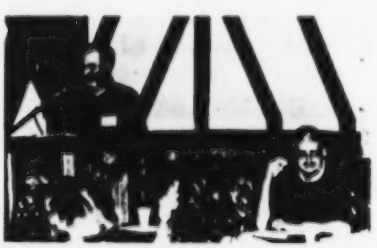
These other programs are not absent of worthwhile components, elements which we in the CSU could appropriately include. On the whole, however, those programs are too narrow in intent, too limited in ambition and too superficial of concern to warrant wholesale adoption in the CSU. What can Minnesota know of diversity, save that which distinguishes Swedes from Norwegians? What can Anselmo College with several hundred students tell us of size, when we are several hundred thousand? And in all candor, what can the State University of Tennessee tell us of excellence or Florida of equity?

If we agree that there are good reasons for student outcomes analysis and real dangers in student outcomes assessment, then it is our responsibility--the CSU professorate's--to design and implement a program worthy of our stature, mindful of our character and consistent with our vision.

Higher education, to appropriate and paraphrase Shelley, should strengthen and purify the affections, enlarge the imagination and add spirit to sense". No single measure, nor snapshot in time can capture so significant a mission, nor can any other than the faculty properly interpret the relationship of data to that mission. The pursuit of knowledge is what we are about and we cannot shirk from this charge simply because the knowledge to be pursued is institutionally reflective. Nor can we, as Kant argued over 200 years ago in The Conflict of the Faculties, abandon our character and expertise to "arbitrary powers". Rather, we must "seize the agenda", hold it in confidence and forge from it a more thorough understanding of the destinies and digressions of all who pass through the community of scholars. Such is the task of a virtuous student outcomes analysis and such is the obligation of us all.

Other panelists are listed below:

Bernie Goldstein, Chair, CSU Advisory Committee on Student Outcomes Assessment, Acting Director of Research and Professional Development and Professor of Biology, San Francisco State University; **Alison Weber**, Chair, California State Students Association; **Mary Burger**, Vice President, Academic Affairs, CSU, Sacramento; **Margaret Blue**, Executive Assistant to the President, Assistant Professor of Political Science, CSU, Dominguez Hills.



EXPERIMENTS WITH STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT ON CAMPUS: FACULTY PERSPECTIVES ON LESSONS LEARNED

For three years, the Academic Program Improvement Campus Grants Program has sponsored experiments to develop campus-based models for student outcomes assessment in general education and the undergraduate majors. The four panelists took a retrospective view at what motivated their campuses/departments to undertake student outcomes assessment, indicators of project successes and failures, and what they would do differently in a new assessment program.

ASSESSMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE WRITING COMPETENCE

Panelist: **Priscilla Chaffe-Stengel**, Professor, Information Systems and Decision Science, CSU, Fresno

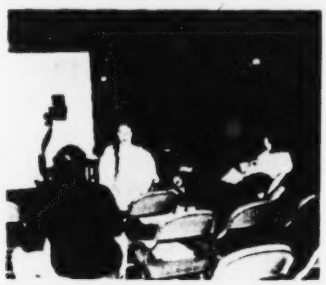
The "Assessment of Undergraduate Writing Competence", CSU, Fresno, was designed to determine the comparability of two different options students have to satisfy the graduation writing requirement on this campus. Students currently have a choice between passing a 3-unit semester-long course or passing a 3-hour examination comprised of two 45-minute essays and several objective tests. The API Project sought to identify significant parameters in estimating and predicting undergraduate writing skills as well as to establish and evaluate a faculty development workshop designed to positively affect the amount of writing faculty assign in their undergraduate courses.

A request was taken through faculty governance on campus to fund a one-semester snapshot of the writing skills of upper division students, a base of local funding to which API funds would be added. Specifically, campus funds were sought to administer and evaluate the Upper Division Writing Examination which would be given one semester to students enrolled in any one of the nineteen upper division writing-intensive courses. However, by the time the expenditure of local funds was approved, the test was mandated. Support from the professor teaching the upper division writing-intensive courses had not been requested prior to the approval of campus funds. The API Project staff had advertently been caught in a "Catch-22. To address the problem, the campus supported a morning breakfast meeting early in the academic year to explain the purpose of the test, negotiate the forms of analysis to be performed, answer questions and complaints, and gain faculty support. To a large extent, the success of the API Project was determined at that meeting.

The progress of the project was enhanced by several factors. The project was designed as a do-able one-year project; we did not promise more than we could deliver. During the course of project,

we received a request for some of our data from one of the Schools on campus. In responding to the request, we anticipated the possibility of the misuse of student results and shared pertinent data in such a way as to satisfy their requested purpose and inhibit their misuse toward unstated purposes. We developed evidence that we are now using in discussing the reformation of campus policy on student writing as well as gathered information from which we can learn more about effective student writers.

What we would have done differently last year we are fortunate enough to be able to do this year under a second API assessment project. We are enriching the base of student test scores and demographics with measures of student attitudes and behaviors. We are gathering multi-dimensional, student specific information. And we are looking at the correlation of attitudes and behaviors with general knowledge and skills for the possibility of replacing some tests with attitude surveys.



STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT IN ACADEMIC PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT IN THEATRE

Panelist: **Catherine Dezeran,**
Associate Professor, Theatre, CSU, Northridge

The Department of Theatre at California State University, Northridge, became interested in student outcomes assessment in conjunction with an experimental program in undergraduate theatre education. The primary purpose of the program was to integrate theory and practice of the many areas of theatre more effectively than traditional theatre education programs by using a systematic, sequential application of theory to practice within a theatre company framework in which students and faculty work together 25-30 hours per week over two semesters.

Academic Program Improvement funds were secured to develop enhanced program effectiveness and increased student knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to successful work in a collaborative art. The goals of the project were to plan, begin implementation, evaluate, and revise for continued use a student

outcomes assessment process for the Department of Theatre. At the end of 1987-88, a phrase we repeated several times by the Project Directors: "If we only knew then, what we know now!" The following summarizes some of what we know now, that we wished we knew then.

We wished we knew the actual amount of time, money, and personnel need for the project. We planned a project that was too extensive in scope and too complex in nature for the resources available. In addition, unanticipated problems retarded the project's progress. Development of a comprehensive student outcomes assessment process requires much time and judicious planning.

We wished we knew the difficulties that we would encounter with faculty interaction and engagement in the project. We found mixed levels of involvement that seemed dependent on faculty time, interest, and trust. We found problems in faculty abilities to identify and agree upon goals and domains of practice for the Department's programs. We found faculty interaction conflict-ridden at times. Development of a successful student outcomes assessment process must involve all faculty in all phases, realizing that the involvement requires a great deal of time and may prove conflict-ridden.

We wished we knew at the outset of the project more about the advantages and disadvantages of the several kinds of assessment instruments available. We found the use of standardized instruments virtually useless. We found the development and use of faculty-generated instruments very beneficial in 1) discovering strengths and weaknesses of departmental programs; 2) motivating comprehensive review and revision of departmental programs; 3) understanding colleagues' pedagogical and artistic philosophies and methods; 4) understanding student needs, interests, and levels of procedures. Successful student outcomes assessment projects require 1) careful consideration of the kinds of instruments that will meet project goals most effectively; 2) use of as many kinds of appropriate instruments as possible; 3) interest and involvement of students in planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. The Project Directors also found the employment of specialists in the field of assessment essential to project processes.

The Department of Theatre's journey into the realm of student outcomes assessment has effected program improvement. Both the success and failures of the project contributed to accomplishing this goal and continue to guide ongoing planning, implementation, and evaluation of student outcomes assessment processes.

INTERDISCIPLINARY GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM
CAL POLY POMONA

Panelist: **Andrew Moss**,
Associate Professor, English, CSPU, Pomona

The Interdisciplinary General Education (IGE) Program offers a team taught sequence of eight interdisciplinary courses that meet most of the humanities and social science requirements for about 400 students at Cal Poly Pomona. Begun in 1983 as an alternative to the university's existing general education offerings, the IGE Program quickly achieved national recognition as an integrated core program, receiving commendation as one of ten outstanding programs in the 1987 G. Theodore Mitau Award Competition for Innovation and Change in Higher Education. Yet, after five years of operation, the program lacked systematic data with which to evaluate its effectiveness or with which to make policy decisions about its curriculum and methods. An outcomes assessment project, funded in 1987 by an Academic Program Improvement grant, enabled the program's coordinators, faculty, and students to clarify the program's outcomes, select evaluation instruments, pilot-test several of the instruments, and develop a program guidebook. Assessment instruments now used in the program include externally-examined capstone projects; commonly scored in-class essays; surveys of student, faculty, and alumni opinion; and portfolios.

The assessment project benefitted the program in several ways. By clarifying the program's outcomes (critical thinking, multi-cultural understanding, etc.), the project helped lay the foundation for all future dialogue on ways to help students achieve the outcomes. Doing so enhanced the IGE Program's role as a laboratory for experimentation in general education. The project also served as a vehicle for faculty development, stimulating inquiry into different visions of the well educated individual. Finally, the project, particularly through the use of the external examiner, pinpointed strengths and weaknesses of the IGE Program's curriculum, giving both faculty and coordinators useful information with which to make necessary improvements.

In the course of the nine month assessment project, a number of problems and issues arose. One of the problems involved trying to

do too much too quickly (e.g., trying to measure too many outcomes with a single instrument), and it became apparent that the project was only initiating a long-term, sustained process. Another problem involved the conflict between faculty autonomy and the need for a collective vision of general education. The conflict manifested itself in the faculty's concerns over additional responsibilities (e.g., the administration of surveys, the participation in common scoring of essays), and in philosophical questions about the ends and means of outcomes assessment.

One way of making the conflict over autonomy a creative one has been to involve faculty as fully as possible in the assessment effort, and to seek out new funding sources (e.g.,lottery discretionary funds) to give faculty released time for developing new approaches to achieve program goals. Assessment has generated considerable change and improvement in the IGE Program; as long as the faculty retain control of the process, its value and integrity will be maintained.

Other panelists were: **Helen Roberts**, Associate Dean, Institute for Teaching and Learning, CSU, Office of the Chancellor, Session Chair; **Cynthia Flores**, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, Imperial Valley Campus, San Diego State University.

STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT IN GENERAL EDUCATION

Panelist: **Herb Kauffman**,
Professor of Humanities, San Francisco State University

My views on the current state of San Francisco State's General Education Program are as follows. We have not addressed the desire of certain legislators to know more about the structure of a General Education component. They hear enough complaints from their constituents about the inconsistencies and contradictions within General Education (GE) to read our Bulletin.

When WASC accreditors spend time around our campus, they can see that our General Education Program is built upon a fundamental

pretense. This pretense is tolerated on pragmatic grounds. Chancellor's E.O. 338 "leaves to each campus faculty the responsibility to develop the institution's particular program". This responsibility was invested in a General Eduction Council. This council has struggled to shape a GE Program intelligible to all; but it could not withstand the manipulations of many departments to earn FTE. These manipulations multiplied the temptations to corrupt and be corrupted. However, the design of GE governance pretended that the ferocious hegemony of the three "liberal arts" schools, (expressed by the Deans and managed by the Provost) did not exist. Further, these three schools could command majority on the Academic Senate. The charge to the General Education Council in setting forth its authority insulates the processes and the actions of the Council from the manipulation of both the academic administration and the academic senate.

The expenditures of campus resources which have gone into patching GE together and palliating the worst effects on students are considerable. The rationale for this expenditure is that it gives people employment. If those same resources could be used for faculty development vis a vis participation in GE teaching and staff coordination, students would benefit.
A new Academic vice-president could find ways to bring together GE assessment and a rational and economic GE Program. If it is to be done, it might be done by indirection. In our case, since pretense has been the cover of an expediency designed to protect the status quo, the most direct approach to problems might be perceived as a piece of ingenuity. For example, the new academic vice president could authorize and support a sophisticated study of the students who withdraw from the university before earning a degree. Such a study is in fact the fundamental study of "outcomes". The study of students who earn cum laude is easy. The study of attrition of ethnics, especially Blacks and Hispanics, is much more interesting and could be highly significant. This should be done by a historically erudite humanist. Such a humanist understands that each generation must discover again a past. That is rigorous work. A paradox is at the center and must be kept in view as the objective which controls other objectives. The paradox is contained in the proposition that literacy originates in violence. A theory of this sort was developed by Paolo Friere as the key to teaching the peasants of his province in Brazil to read and write. This is a distant as you can get from father E.D. Hirsch Jr., whose literacy is nothing more than a nostalgia for a vague status quo, a nostalgia which moralistically questions the expenditures of education money to deal with endemic illiteracy.

The Hirsch messages about literacy are already felt and resented among middle-school teachers. They resent the sweeping judgments. How many students are they able to deliver from an eighth grade ready to be again tested and diagnosed in the ninth grade? In CSU

we get a cross-section of stubborn and the passive students. The phenomena of most interest reside in examining the real reasons for students withdrawing from the university.

Here, I will take liberties with the best prophets. Melville constructed his universe with Captain Ahab and Moby Dick sharing energy. Ahab asks: " From what intelligent agent, have I received this irremediable hurt? My life, henceforth, will be directed toward re-establishing justice. I will not be condemned for errors which are built into the universe".

Melville's parable does not depend upon Ahab's reputation as an experienced whaling captain, although he was. The parable is about the gratuitous harm done to "me" by the gratuitous operations of the powers of nature. From the point of view of many students the hunt for the whales is work, but also an adventure with the community, a community contending with the elements. Melville's kind of romantic irony depends on remembering that whales are not malevolent. It also depends upon the magnification of outrage at gratuitous errors which do irremediable damage. What do you make of a system in which we teach, both by example and precept, that teacher and students should not personalize judgments?

Other panelists for this session were: **Andrew Moss**, Associate Professor, CSPU, Pomona; **Bonnie Neumann**, Dean, Division of Undergraduate Studies, San Diego State University.

STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT IN THE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Panelist: **Diane Halpern**,
Professor of Psychology, CSU San Bernardino, Convener

Assessment at the departmental level focuses on what and how much is learned in the major. Usually, we assess students and courses on a course by course basis. By shifting to a learning outcome model, we can examine academic majors by determining what and how much students know when they complete the program. The central question that should guide assessment at the departmental level is "What should we expect a BA or BS in our discipline to know?" Although the nature of the assessment will vary among institutions, there are six general areas that should be evaluated:

1. Knowledge Base - All social science majors should have solid factual knowledge about significant theories, issues and methods of inquiry in their discipline.

2. Thinking Skills - Every social science major must develop critical thinking skills in order to comprehend basic concepts in their discipline. These include recognizing the need for control groups, not confusing correlation with cause, understanding the concepts of likelihood and uncertainty, and identifying valid and invalid conclusions based on empirical evidence.

3. Language Skills - The language skills include reading and writing complex prose. Graduates of any social science program should be able to comprehend journal articles that they could not comprehend when they entered the curriculum. They should also be able to present a coherent and persuasive argument on a contemporary topic in both written and oral form.

4. Information Gathering and Synthesis - All social science graduates should be able to find information in the library and should voluntarily read more than when they entered the major. They should be able to synthesize information from a variety of sources in order to derive a conclusion or reach a decision.

5. Interpersonal Skills - A "noncongitive" gain that I consider to be as important as all of the other objectives in increased tolerance for differences, especially as they relate to all types of minority groups.

6. Practical Experience - A relevant work experience should be an integral part of the undergraduate degree requirements.

Given a diverse array of desirable outcomes, it is clear that different measurements will be needed. Her is my list of some possibilities:

1. Exit Exams

2. Departmental Comprehensive Exams

3. Standardized Exams Designed for Freshman-Senior Comparisons

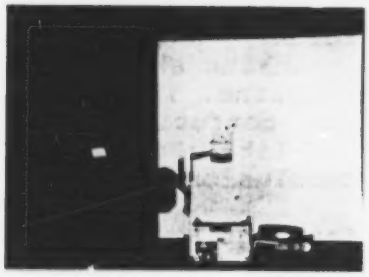
4. Available Data (placement tests, student perceptions, course patterns, educational goals)

5. Nonintrusive Measures (number of papers assigned, number of library books checked out, course content)

6. Retention/Attrition Data (by major broken down by sex, ethnicity, and special programs)

7. Student, Alumni and Employer Surveys.

Beware of misuse of data!



FIRST ROUND INSIGHTS OF STUDENT OUTPUT ASSESSMENT IN ECONOMICS

Panelist: **Lu Ann M. Duffus,**
Assistant Professor of Economics,
CSU, Hayward

First round insights from an assessment activity currently under development in the economics departments at three California State Universities (CSU) are presented. The activity described here is part of a project sponsored by the Association of American Colleges (AAC) which is of much larger dimensions. Although the model proposed has its problems as will be discussed below, it has been developed and implemented by the faculty and may add to the students' development.

The purpose of this project is to assess learning in the academic major using a variety of instruments and external examiners. The way that the faculty in the California cluster of the AAC project put the assessment project into operation was to give the students a forum for showing us their level of skills; a capstone course. In the economics course, students had the opportunity to use the material they had learned in other classes by completing a series of assignments, a written essay exam, and an oral exam.

Obstacles

Many obstacles had be overcome in order to put the program into operation. First, the program is time intensive. In the CSU where teaching loads are very heavy and research demands are significant, time is a resource that few faculty members are able to devote. Second, the fear that the results of the study would be used for purposes other than program development had to be overcome. Another concern was that too much would be read into the assessment results. Student output was affected by many variables, only one which is our curriculum. Fourth, it was difficult to achieve a balance between depth and breadth in the instruments used. Fifth, enticing students to participate was very difficult.

We anticipated that reaching consensus would be a major obstacle. However, we were surprised at how easy it was to reach a

consensus about the content of the exams. The success of this step is at least partially due to the fact that we focused on the kinds of questions our majors should be able to address; not the answers.

What Are We Learning?

Although we have yet to go though our final year of assessment, what were are learning is interesting. First, assessment simply to assess is not desirable. Neither faculty nor students expect to gain from devoting time to test-taking. Second, even with experimental instruments, the unique flavor of each of the three departments came through. The oral exams were most revealing instrument, but also the hardest to quantify. Yet, based on our perceptions and the students evaluations, the orals would have been less valuable without the series of assignments. The written exam was least useful. Third , assessment differs from program review although they are not mutually exclusive activities. Fourth, without strong commitment on the part of the faculty and financial support and reward from the institution,
the program is likely to fail.

STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT IN MATH AND THE NATURAL SCIENCES

Panelist: **Leigh W. Mintz,**
Associate Vice President, Academic Programs, CSU, Hayward, Convener

This session focused on the project entitled "Assessing Learning in Academic Majors", an effort supported by the Association of American Colleges and funded by FIPSE. This nationwide project involves eighteen campuses in six clusters of three similar, geographically proximate institutions. The San Francisco Bay Area cluster consists of the CSU campus at Hayward, San Francisco, and San Jose. Each cluster selects three liberal arts and sciences disciplines for assessment. Faculty representatives of each discipline on the three campuses meet to define their common and unique program objectives. Then, faculty from the other two campuses come to the third campus and administer comprehensive written and oral examinations to 15 graduating seniors in that discipline. The same process is followed for each discipline on each campus. The testing process occurs in successive years and each is followed by feedback to students on their performance and to departments on the success of the curriculum.

In the Bay Area cluster, two of the participating disciplines, Biology and Mathematics, are in the Sciences. (The third discipline is Economics in the Social Sciences.) The faculty selected a course as a vehicle for the assessment process. The

course not only provided a framework for the assessment, but in most cases it also provided the incentives, WTU for faculty and SCU for students, for participation. The assessments varied widely, but have been faculty designed, administered, and utilized for feedback. Thesis faculty "ownership" has been a key feature of the process. The AAC was most interested in testing the model of using outside faculty examiners as the assessment medium, but the projects disclosed many other useful facets of assessment.

Judith Ekstrand, Associate Professor at San Francisco and the coordinator of the Mathematics group, described the activities and results of that assessment effort in detail. Edward Keller, the Mathematics participant from Hayward, also contributed insights. Bernard Goldstein, the faculty participant and Professor of Biology at San Francisco, and Jennifer Taylor, a Hayward biology graduate who had undergone the assessment in Spring 1988, were also active contributors. Dr. Goldstein and Ms. Taylor provided many useful insights into the great value of the oral examination in which they both participated.

Judith Ekstrand, Associate Professor of Math, San Francisco State University, was the remaining panelist.

STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: STATEWIDE CHALLENGES

THE CAMPUS ADMINISTRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Panelist: **Leigh W. Mintz,**
Associate Vice President, Academic Programs, CSU, Hayward

In viewing outcomes assessment and most other issues, campus administrators need to keep in mind that we have been (and often still are) students, alumni, and faculty and to put ourselves in those shoes. We must constantly ask ourselves, "how will a faculty member see this matter, how will a student respond to this issue?" and so forth. In addition, my perspective is strongly influenced by serving as the project director for the three-year AAC/FIPSE project (also supported by API for a year) for assessing student learning in the major. This project involves eighteen campuses nationwide, divided into six clusters of three geographically proximate and similar institutions. Three majors have been selected in each major and faculty examiners from the other two campuses administer oral and written comprehensive examinations to a sample of 15 graduating seniors in that major on the third campus. Three guiding principles have emerged from this project for me.

First, faculty (with student advice and consultation) must own, operate, and use the results of the assessment program for it to be successful. The real purpose of assessment is for faculty better to know themselves, their colleagues, their programs, and their students so that they can be improved. In this context, outcomes assessment is a very valuable means of introspection, evaluation, and improvement. In our project, we do not use assessment to bestow or withhold degrees, to rank campuses or programs, to punish underachievers, or other nefarious purposes.

As a result of our assessment program, we have discovered many more valuable and positive things. Our faculty have discovered their programs are alike much more than was thought, though there are some significant differences in emphasis and approach in larger programs. Most of the faculty and students have discovered the value and importance of a capstone, integrative course involving active student participation. Students have nearly universally praised the oral examinations/interviews as valuable learning experiences unfortunately missing from our existing programs. Some faculty have discovered that the great diversity of lower division preparation, resulting from our very heavy transfer enrollment, requires a rethinking of the junior course curriculum in terms of reviewing the prerequisite material. The variety of written and oral assessment measures used have shown that different students respond differently to different assessment techniques.

Second, administrators have a role to play, but it is to facilitate and expedite, not to intrude or dictate the process. We handle the logistics, do the legwork and research, write the summary reports, schedule meetings, keep the momentum going, try to involve others, and perform many other task to move the project along. But we also must protect the integrity of the introspective purpose of the project. (This shouldn't be interpreted as protecting the faculty from having to do assessment, but protecting them from the misuse of their results). In particular, we should avoid collecting numbers which can lead to invidious and misleading interpretations and rankings.

This does not mean we have no interest in the results of assessment. We want to know that the faculty have discovered the need for oral exercises, the value of capstone courses, the need for a junior level macroeconomics course, the weakness of student problem-solving skills, and the means being tried to improve these skills. We do need to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses they have discovered and the means they are using to improve in areas where problems or discrepancies are encountered. Third, another significant administrative role is to find or suggest funding mechanisms. We sought and gained grant support from the AAC/FIPSE and API offices to develop pilot projects. We

are now being challenged to find creative ways of continuing and expanding the positive outcomes of the project after the expenditure of the seed money. If capstone integrative seminars are an extremely valuable part of the curriculum, perhaps they can be taught from existing resources by redirecting teaching time from less important major electives. If learning about how and what our students learn in the discipline is important, it can be given equal weight with disciplinary research in the RPT process. We all do program reviews of each major once every five years and most CSU campuses involve outside evaluators. At present these evaluators tend to focus on inputs such as faculty qualifications, curriculum structure/diversity, library/ computer resources, equipment, and so forth. After several program review cycles using this methodology, we could have focus on "outputs" rather than these "inputs". The outside evaluators could administer written and oral assessments to a sample of students on the campus and provide feedback to the department as the major component of their reviews. The feedback from the outcomes assessment could provide raw material for student advising and curriculum planning sessions, things we already are engaged in doing. In summary, many assessment elements can be built into existing activities by shifting emphases. And remember that assessment doesn't have to be done for each student in all majors every year. As long as it is done at regular intervals to representative samples of students by a variety of techniques and the results are analyzed for the improvement of teaching and learning, I believe we will have satisfied both ourselves and the concerns of those outside the academy.

But administrators must walk a fine line. We must encourage faculty to undertake outcomes assessment (and the new WASC accreditation standard is certainly a power lever), but for the right reasons: to better know themselves, their programs, and their students. I believe most CSU faculty truly do care about the quality of their teaching, programs, and students. Their own sense of self-esteem and decency is really a powerful motivation.

In closing, I would like to stress the connection between assessment and access. I believe that the access issue is a cornerstone of California public institutions today. Most faculty have some idea about the teaching and learning of the best prepared and culturally similar students of the type they themselves were. But most have only the vaguest idea of how to develop the talent, abilities, and knowledge of those from different cultures, those who have been under-prepared, those who have been educationally disadvantaged, those with differing communication styles, and so forth. I believe that assessment can help us identify these issues and suggest strategies and solutions. Teaching and learning may be mysterious, but if we can't know what we are doing and if what we are doing is having any effect, we can hardly expect public support. Just saying "trust us" because what we are doing is somehow "good", and we

are above the scrutiny to which all other elements of society are subject, simply will not suffice. Nor will it win support, either morally or monetarily for us. Particularly when the attrition rate is so high for many groups of students an when employers criticize the skills of our graduates, we cannot afford not to know and improve ourselves. Access is not simply entry in the 80s and 90s; it is entry, achievement, and graduation with support along the entire path. Outcomes assessment is an invaluable tool in helping us succeed in this enterprise.

Other panelists for this session were: **Diane Halpern**, Professor of Psychology, CSU, San Bernardino, Session Chair; **Becky Loewy**, Chair, CSU Statewide Academic Senate, Office of the Chancellor; **Sally Loyd Casanova**, Dean, Academic Affairs, Plans, CSU, Office of the Chancellor; **John Richardson**, Liaison, California State Student Association, CSU, Office of the Chancellor.

STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT: CAMPUS CHALLENGES

CAMPUS CHALLENGES

Panelist: **James Lopez**, Director, Educational Opportunity Program, CSPU, Pomona, Session Chair

There is no question that there is a strong and growing interest in assessment of the educational achievement of college students. The public, and more recently, state legislatures are focusing on what competencies a college student should possess upon graduation from college. A common theme among the many publics higher education serves who are interested in student outcomes assessment, is a desire to assure and improve higher levels of student performance. Most educators would agree that the concern with the outcomes of higher education and student achievement/performance will more that likely become one of the most visible items in the public policy arena. Unlike some institutions in higher education that have taken a wait and see

position in hopes that the assessment issue is a fad and it will go away, the CSU as system, has made the deliberate decision to embark on a mission to explore the monumental tasks of devising student outcomes assessment programs.

The campus challenges are many, especially when dealing with the complexity and diversity among the nineteen campuses in terms of campus settings and missions, divergent faculties, and the differing student populations served. Following are only a few of the basic issues/questions that need to be addressed pertaining to the challenges facing campuses in the implementation of student outcomes assessment programs:

*It is generally agreed that funding for the development and operation of outcomes assessment programs should be in addition to regular institutional budgets.

*What are the prospects for receiving adequate additional funding?

*To what extent should campuses begin outcomes assessment programs without additional funds?

*If in fact the faculty of the individual campuses will be assigned primary responsibility for all areas encompassing student outcomes assessment, what steps are being taken to provide leadership and promote cooperation at the departmental level, school, administration and institutional level?

*Many students demonstrate a reluctance to take the various assessment tests now in place in the CSU, i.e. English Placement Test (EPT), Elementary Level Mathematics (ELM), Graduate Writing Test (GWT).

*What steps can the individual campuses take to promote and gain the support of students to "buy in" to the idea of participating in increased student outcomes assessment programs?

*What can be done to motivate students to take and do their best on tests in which they feel have little if any, personal relevance to them?

Other panelists were: **E. Nicholas Genovese**, Chair, Campus Senate, San Diego State University; **Arlene Okerlund**, Academic Vice President, San Jose State University; **Michael Hughes**, Representative, California State Student Association, Sonoma State University.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Olita Harris, Conference Coordinator, School of Social Work, San Diego State University

The basic challenge with which we are faced is to action. The challenge is to survivability without Post Traumatic Stress. This means that the will to begin the process of exploring student outcomes assessment must exist. The challenge is for steps toward definition of and agreement about campus assessment issues with the realization that assessment is not going away (the genie is out of the bottle). We need to move away from the notion that assessment is always pejorative and consequently to be avoided at all costs. The challenge is for each of us to convince <u>one</u> other person on campus that student outcomes assessment has potential for the improvement of teaching and learning. Then that person is charged with convincing another and so on until by geometric progression a cadre of people exists to then begin defining issues and developing assessment strategies. The challenge is to identify others on campus who have interest in and expertise in student outcomes assessment. The challenge is to continue to build campus teams and become resources for one another. The final challenge is a proactive one rather than reactive and that is to seize your own campus agenda for student outcomes assessment.

Feedback from the Conference Evaluations indicated that all campus teams either had assessment activities initiated on their individual campuses or intended to at least begin exploring or discussing the possibility of student outcomes activities. Indeed, it appears that most expected to become engaged in assessment strategies at the local campus level.

The CSU has continued to seize its own agenda through the Systemwide Advisory Committee on Student Outcomes Assessment. This committee has been charged with the development of guiding

principles for CSU policy on student outcomes assessment. These Guiding Principles were circulated widely among faculty and administrators for review and comments. As a result of the feedback, CSU Policy Recommendations to the Chancellor on Student Outcomes Assessment has been drafted. Since the November Conference, the Advisory Committee has held three regional meetings for further review of the policy recommendations. Input from, those consultations have been weighed carefully in the drafting of the final recommendations.